

Anita was walking with her baby, Terrence, in a baby carrier when she dropped her phone. As she bent to pick it up, the baby carrier unexpectedly popped open and Terrence fell out. Terrence's only injuries were scratches on his head, but out of caution, Anita took him to an emergency room. Hospital staff assumed that Terrence's injuries were due to neglect, which led the Family Court to file a petition to remove him from Anita. Fearing she would lose her son, Anita sought the help of LSEM's Family Court Program.



Anita's attorneys examined the baby carrier, conducted online research and spoke with a representative of the manufacturer. They learned that strap buckles on her model of baby carrier were easily loosened by a kicking baby, and other children had also been injured due to this design defect.

Once Anita's attorneys demonstrated the design malfunction to the Family Court, the neglect case was dismissed, avoiding legal action that would have left the family in limbo for many months. Anita was reunited with her son, and they are now free to continue life as a family without the fear of separation.

An Investment in Our Community

The holistic and comprehensive services that LSEM provides assist client-families to achieve safety and create economic and family stability, which in turn strengthens the community.

Our Tagline reads "Pursuing Justice, Strengthening Lives", and with your help, we do just that. It is through our pursuit of justice that we continue to strengthen the lives of those we serve, empowering them to reach further and ultimately, live better. A contribution to LSEM is an investment in the region's infrastructure, which will pay rich dividends in the future.

While our work is focused on solving long-term problems for individuals and families, the impact ripples outward to benefit the entire community.

For information on how to help by making a donation, please call the Development Office at 314-256-8742.

Contact Information

For help, please call:

Main Office
4232 Forest Park Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63108
314-534-4200
1-800-444-0514

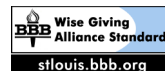
Union Outreach Office
20 South Church St., Ste. C
Union, MO 63084
636-583-7877
1-866-583-7877

Hannibal Branch Office
801 Broadway
Hannibal, MO 63401
573-248-1111
1-800-767-2018



For a listing of the 21 counties served by LSEM, and other information about the services we provide, please visit our website at www.lsem.org. Please also visit the statewide website at www.lsmo.org for additional resources.

The mission of LSEM is to provide high quality civil legal assistance and equal access to justice for low-income people in Eastern Missouri.



Family Court Program



Legal Services
of Eastern Missouri

lsem.org



Serving 21 counties
in eastern Missouri

Overview

The Family Court Program of Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM) helps low income families stay together.

We may assist you if:

- You are a parent,
- Children's Division is involved with your family, and
- You have a case before the Family Court of St. Louis County.

Our advocacy is aimed at keeping children out of foster care or keeping their time in care to a minimum.

LSEM's Family Court Program is the only independent institution in St. Louis County that provides full civil representation to parents in child protection cases (cases alleging child abuse or neglect), which can ultimately result in the termination of a child/parent relationship.

The Missouri Supreme Court has called the termination of parental rights the "civil death penalty." In 2003, the Annie E. Casey Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study determined that compared to the general population, youth who spent any time in foster care suffered post-traumatic stress disorder at a rate double that of U.S. Iraq war veterans.

In the past 15 years we have helped scores of clients navigate the complex system of child welfare litigation to reunify with their children.

Our Work

Our legal services are targeted to individuals who need representation in Children's Division administrative hearings and investigations in St. Louis County.

The Family Court Program provides families in crisis with free legal representation and social services to deliver better outcomes for children and families. We believe that every family matters and we have extensive experience helping clients navigate complex child protection laws and procedures.

Our work includes:

- Direct legal representation for a parent in a Family Court case in St. Louis County;
- Domestic violence advocacy;
- Related case management services, including social services resources and assistance with housing;
- Out of court advocacy for the client at meetings with Children's Division concerning the family;
- Service plan and safety plan negotiations;
- A limited number of administrative appeals of substantiated findings by Children's Division.



"If a society values its children, it must cherish their parents." - John Bowlby

How To Obtain Help

How to obtain our legal services

When you call for assistance, an Intake Specialist will ask you about your household income, resources, and household members. LSEM has income and resources guidelines, and is required by funders to document certain information regarding the people it helps. LSEM must ask for this information to determine if you are eligible for our services.

What happens after you speak with the Intake Worker?

The Family Court Program staff reviews all applications to determine which cases we are able to accept. These decisions are based on the priorities of LSEM, as well as available resources. We will contact you to let you know if we are able to represent you. If so, we will meet with you in person to review your paperwork and discuss your options before we go to court.

How will the Family Court Program help you?

If Children's Division is involved with your family and you have a case in Family Court, you need strong support services to help you work with this difficult legal system. Parents face losing their children – temporarily or permanently – if they fail to fulfill the requirements of the court.

The Family Court Program represents clients through a holistic model blending case management and legal representation. Your ability to safely and quickly reunify as a family will be bolstered by our advocacy and experience in court, plus the intensive help we offer your family outside of court.